

EXPRESS MAIL LABEL: EL229774413US
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PATENT

PORTABLE COMPUTING DEVICE WITH LEATHER GRAIN TOP

Related Application Data

This application is a continuation-in-part of U.S. Design Patent Application Serial No. 29/099,171, filed on January 14, 1999, which in turn, is a continuation-in-part of U.S. Design Patent Application Serial No. 29/066,939, filed on February 19, 1997, now U.S. Design Patent No. D407,386, issued on March 30, 1999, which applications and patent are hereby incorporated by reference in their entirety.

Background of the Invention

Portable personal computer shipments were expected to rise to about 18 million units in 1998. Recent market research has indicated that as the price of portable computing falls, and more and more competitors provide like features, it is getting harder and harder for manufacturers to differentiate their products in the marketplace. Most portable computing devices use a beige or charcoal colored housings. Such colors provide little or no market distinction, which has forced manufacturers to look to translucent bright colors, such as Apple Computer, Inc.'s iMac™ and iBook™, or metallic finishes, such as Packard Bell's Z1™. Such computers have been well received, but they are not very appropriate for business use.

Accordingly, there is a need for a portable computing device having an attractive or unique appearance for distinguishing itself in the marketplace, and providing the look and feel of leather.

Summary of the Invention

Portable computing devices are provided by this invention which include a housing having top and bottom portions connected by a hinge. The top and bottom housing portions include an inwardly facing surface, an outwardly facing surface and a peripheral edge. A set of keys are disposed on an inwardly facing surface of the bottom portion of the housing,

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and a display screen is disposed on an inwardly facing surface of the top portion of the housing. The portable computing devices, include the improvement of a leather grain layer disposed on an exterior facing surface of at least the top portion of the housing.

The use of synthetic or natural leather on portable computing devices adds a
5 luxurious and expensive looking aesthetic appearance to such devices. The leather grain layer can be disposed on a major portion of the outwardly facing surface of the top portion to provide an eye catching, upscale appearance that is perfect for the business environment. The high friction surface and texture of the leather is also easier for fingers to grip and hold.

Brief Description of the Drawings

10 The accompanying drawings illustrate preferred embodiments of the invention as well as other information pertinent to the disclosure, in which:

FIG. 1: is a front perspective view of a portable notebook computing device having a leather grain layer;

FIG. 2: is the portable notebook computing device of FIG. 1 in an open
15 condition;

FIG. 3: is a hand-held portable computing device also having a leather grain top layer; and

FIG. 4: is the hand-held computing device of FIG. 3 in an open condition.

Detailed Description of the Invention

20 With respect to the drawings, and in particular, to the notebook computer 100 shown FIGS. 1 and 2, a description of one preferred embodiment of this invention follows. The notebook computer 100 is of a typical design, including a housing having a top portion 17 and a bottom portion 19 connected by hinge 20. Hinge 20 has at least one hinge element, but is illustrated in FIG.1 as having two of such elements. The top and bottom portions, also called
25 shells because of the shallow cavities they contain, have inwardly facing surfaces and outwardly facing surfaces, and a peripheral edge. A set of keys 18 is disposed on the inwardly facing

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surface of the bottom housing portion 19 and a display screen 16 is disposed on an inwardly facing surface of the top housing portion 17. In an important aspect of this invention, a leather grain layer 10 is disposed on the exterior facing surface of the top portion of the housing 17. In the embodiment shown in FIG. 1, a pair of lateral edges 12 and 14 are provided which can be
5 non-ornamental or smooth in appearance. This is optional, since the top can contain a partial or a full leather grain, and the shell can be provided in a variety of shapes and sizes, with curved or square edges and/or corners.

It will be apparent to one of ordinary skill in the art that the leather grain layer 10 of this invention can be a natural leather or a synthetic leather material, such as embossed vinyl.

10 The leather grain ideally exhibits a random grain pattern such as that exhibited by natural leather. It is envisioned that one of ordinary skill in the art will be able to use leather and leather-like materials of known sources, with the ability to bind these materials to the upper housing portion 117 in a conventional manner, such as by adhesive, heat sealing or ultrasonic welding, for example.

15 The portable computing device of this invention may be embodied by a hand-held or "palmtop" computing device 200 as shown in FIGS. 3 and 4. Such devices are known to have a great deal of computing power, but generally have a smaller keyboard 118 and display screen 116 located in the lower housing portion 119 and upper housing portion 117, respectively. Hand-held devices also may include, for example, a series of apertures 122 in the housing for a
20 speaker or microphone, for example.

As with the previous notebook embodiment 100, the hand-held computing device 200 can include a pair of optional smooth lateral edges 112 and 114. Such lateral edges can be helpful in protecting the edge of the leather grain layer from being damaged or delaminated due to heavy use or contact with hard surfaces.

25 From the foregoing, it can be realized that this invention provides portable computing devices having a leather grain top for providing a distinctive appearance, better tactile feel and gripping capability, a more luxurious feel and better marketing distinction. Although various embodiments have been illustrated, this was for the purpose of describing, but not

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limiting the invention. Various modifications which will become apparent to one skilled in the art, are within the scope of this invention described in the attached claims.

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